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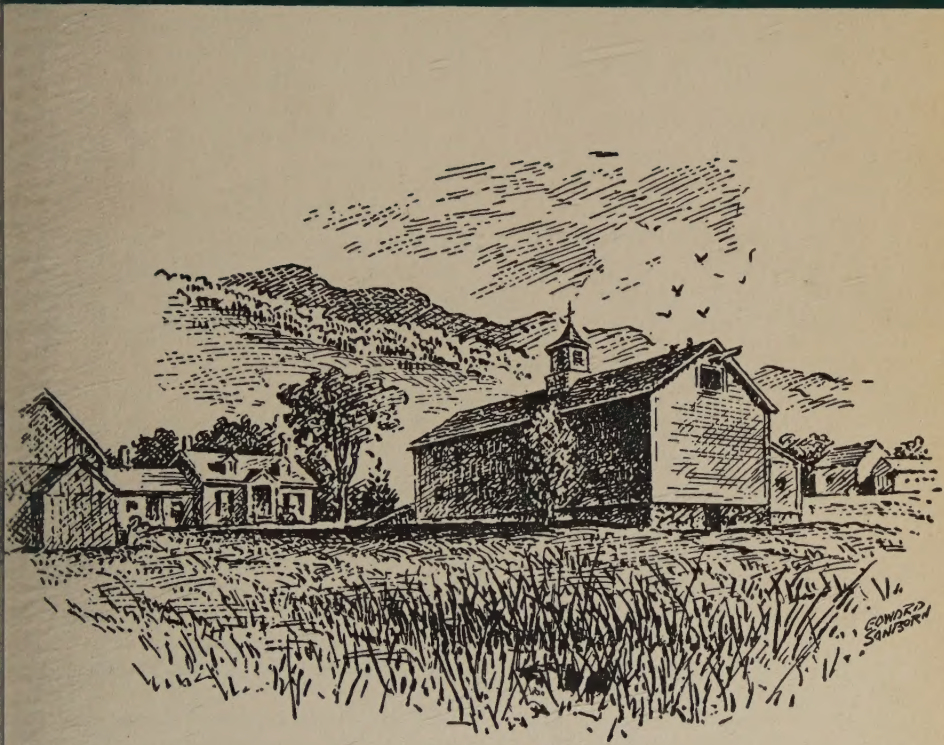

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EARLE WILLIAMS NEWTON, *Editor*

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MY FATHER BUILT A BARN

By RODNEY W. ROUNDY

WE LIVED on the Upper Meadows. Members of nine households of neighbors were Upper Meadows folks. Our farm place was on the Connecticut River in Vermont, five miles above Bellows Falls, in the Town of Rockingham; it was some forty miles, as goes the more or less winding highway, to the Vermont-Massachusetts line. Between us and Bellows Falls were other meadows, those at the mouth of the Williams River, two miles away, and the Lower Meadows near the village outskirts. From our place, by the roundabout traveled road, it was four miles to the Springfield-Windsor County line. Upper Meadows was almost the northeasternmost corner of Windham County. What a place—there were none better—for the developing life and the strengthening character of a growing boy!

Our farm of sixty to seventy-five acres of tillable land and twice that amount of hillside and upland woods was the southernmost tip of the eight successive farmland areas of the Upper Meadows; "Roundy Meadows" it is called in these recent years. There is much fishing done now in "Roundy's Cove." The entire meadows' area extended easterly from backgrounds of green-clad hills to the flowing stream. Along a terrace, some thirty to fifty feet above the levels below ran, for a mile and a half, a gently curving highway; it seems to have been provided by natural forces for this very purpose. On this shelf of land were located the houses, barns and other buildings on a level well above the crests of flood waters, even those of the great freshet of 1927. A shut-in neighborhood, for me, for members of our household as for all oldtime residents the vale was unique in loveliness, scarcely surpassed by any other similar formation for the whole length of the river valley, from Connecticut Lake in the northern most tip of New Hampshire to Long Island Sound. The rising sun, transforming the morning darkness into the light of day, shone first on our side of the valley; its setting rays made glorious for us the houses, barns, pastures and green trees of our sister state. Across the valley were the New Hampshire hills, the homes and farms of Charlestown folks.

In such a setting of the great out-of-doors MY FATHER BUILT A BARN. It was in the year of 1887, thirteen years after first occupancy in 1874. Experiences of the time are cherished memories and the substance of potent, abiding influences. The new barn was greatly needed; the time for construction was long overdue; the year for action came when I was twelve years of age—and it was not a day too soon.

With the acquisition of the farm went a lot of very old and long-used barns which had "seen better days." They were located on the terrace south of the house. The constantly traveled meadow road separated the sites. All of these barns—the old barn, so-called, the horse barn and the south barn—were dilapidated relics from the past years. They had been built at various times and with no common form or pattern. In the course of the passing years when additional space was needed for expanding crops and more farm animals a barn was built. They were of assorted sizes and for multiplied uses, a motley lot. There was no rhyme in their several locations, not much rhythm in their relations to one another nor reason in the complete ensemble.

One of the most practical facts of their settings was that between them was ample space for a large open-air barnyard with watering troughs at either end; the barnyard was flanked on the eastern side by a rambling shed of rude construction and on the west by a sturdily built high fence. On the north side of the "old barn," meaning the oldest one, was another barnyard, used at times but not continuously. Its north side was at the top of the bank descending to the "meadow road." On both north and east sides were other old sheds of unhewn trunks of trees for posts and with roofs of untrimmed boards and slabs. All these sheds were in varying stages of dilapidation, make-shift improvisations which had had their day.

Closest to the meadow road and nearest to the house was the corn barn with sidings of narrow boards spaced for air circulation and of size sufficient for the storage of a thousand bushels of "corn on the cob"; the ample interior was a spacious workshop where the corn was shelled from the cobs and other tooled projects completed; especially in the summer time it provided room for a variety of farm tools when not in use.

Almost beyond my remembrance was a rickety hog pen, a barn by itself, next to the highway. Since demolition, long before the other barns were razed, its location has been marked by a maple tree increasing its stateliness through the years. Tiny when the building

was torn down, it has become through the years a mark of glory. How beautiful it is with green leaves of summer and its even more glorious autumn magnificence! As I think of its growth through the years of my life I am doubly sure that "only God can make a tree."

The winter quarters for two to four hundred lambs, sheep less than a year of age, and a maximum of one hundred breeding ewes were in the sprawling sheds adjoining but south of the southernmost barn, called the "South Barn." Here they consumed the hay, rowen and some of the coarser fodder and fattened on the shell corn raised on ten or twelve acres. The lambs were shipped to the "Brighton Market" in the late winter or early springtime; in early May the ewes were sheared and, with their newborn lambs, "turned out" to pasture. These sheds were amply supplied with feeding racks for the hay and watering troughs for each of their divisions. Adjoining their pens was the yard equipped with especially constructed troughs from which the lambs and ewes ate their grains in separate shifts. Cattle stables were in the "horse barn" and the attached "old barn." The stalls for the horses were at the northwest corner. Floors and empty sheds were summer storage places for hayracks, oxcarts and farming tools generally.

The hay, more than a hundred tons each year, coming from the fields was necessarily pitched up, all but the few tons at the bottom of the bays; the entire crop, almost, had to be lifted, forkful by forkful and by back-breaking work, to the scaffolds above the stables and the stalls and to the higher ones above the barn floors. Besides the man pitching off the hay from the load others were needed, two at least, often three or four to mow away the hay in the extended levels, always mounting higher and higher, and beneath the high rafters. Threshing the oats and the barley required a real crew of workmen to feed the threshing machine from the high mows or from the loads fresh from the field, take care of the grain coming from the spouts and stow away the straw on bays and scaffolds already overflowing or on the stacks outside. For thirteen years, father and all the rest of us "got along" with things as they had been and were; certainly we could not have done without the old barns. Each succeeding summer season determination for something better and more adequate strengthened. Demise of the ancient structures was long postponed. At last the time came and the year arrived when the new barn was built.

Building the New Barn

For plans my father was the creative genius. In forecasting he was

the conceiving architect. How long plans had been incubating in his mind I do not know. A two decker was the answer and what was that? A barn with one floor above the other. Whence came the idea? I never knew. To the best of my knowledge no other Connecticut River farms with all their productiveness had such a structure. There were other ones, large and useful along the valley; that I know. There were those well-built, carefully appointed, convenient and well-adapted for their uses; there were those which had cost much money in their building and provision of accessories. But there were no two deckers that I had ever seen or heard about.

The barn must be ample in size; father's dream for a large barn actually came into shape and form. It was as large or larger than any other in the valley; it had features all its own combined with suggestions from other sources. For adequacy its size was sufficient to store the products of our many fertile acres, the hay, fodder, straw and grain, and to shelter horses, cattle and sheep of sufficient numbers to consume by early summer days the entire production of the preceding seasons. To supplement the farm-grown crops, satisfy the appetites of hungry animals and fatten sheep and hogs for market a considerable tonnage of meals and grains was purchased annually from Frank Adams, grain dealer in Bellows Falls.

But to return to the building of the barn. A structure of three stories—basement or cellar and two floors, one above the other for the entire length, skirted by wide and deep bays on each side, plus ample spaces under the rafters and beneath the great roofs—was the accomplished plan. The barn was ninety-eight feet long and forty-five feet wide. An addition of fifteen feet in width and for the entire length of the building, consisting of basement and one high story, was later added to the north side. It provided added capacity needed for annual harvests.

The basement had large posts, nine feet high, supporting substantially the entire structure; they were really higher, sometimes fully two feet, by reason of the great stones beneath each of the great chestnut posts. In its height the frame allowed fourteen feet for the second story and ten feet more to the eaves of the third story, actually fourteen feet above the second floor. The distance from ridgepole to ground, at the eastern end, was fully sixty feet.

Months were consumed in preparation for actual building. Various men and teams were employed. Cutting the trees for timber to be used, drawing the logs to the saw mill and returning back home the boards, planks, three by fours and other lumber for the framing and

the building together with the many thousands of shingles for the great roofs was the work of the whole preceding winter and for much of the spring time. All the large timbers for the posts and framing beams were selected and hauled from the upland wood lots to the westward, placed on numerous skids nearby the old barns and hewed to the square by men accustomed to the uses of broad axes. Towering straight pine trees, sixteen in number, hewn eight inches square for the full lengths needed, forty-five feet, were made ready as the cross beams to be used at the base and above the second story. As such they held firmly together and gave lasting stability to the whole building. All boards and timbers possible of use from the old barns were embodied in the new.

Two brothers, Frank and Oscar Gammell, were the boss carpenters, the ones who perfected the plans and assumed full direction for construction. Daily they came from their homes, three miles away, and daily, after ten hours labor, took their homeward ways. Others for hewing the timbers and for special jobs performed their varied tasks. Much common labor was required. The great retaining and foundation wall for the west end of the basement was the work of a trained mason and his helpers. Stones of assorted sizes, some of them large and heavy, for use in building the wall, were blasted and quarried from the hillside ledges a few rods north and west from the farm house. Oxen hauled them on staunch stone boats to their respective locations. Topping the retaining wall was laid the first framed timber running the entire width of the building.

The framing work, the making of mortises and tenons, the careful planning for the braces with holes for the wooden pins, were done with the greatest care and exactitude. At last the great day arrived for the basement frame to go up. Men from all around came to help on the day set for the raising. Bent by bent the timbers were pushed and lifted into place by many strong hands and arms with reaches lengthened by spike poles. The framed timbers, connecting at right angles the long crosswise beams, the horizontal and perpendicular braces were placed according to plan; all were made secure by the driven wooden pins. With clocklike precision the work went on to its conclusion; the basement frame at the end of the day was a permanent reality.

Other weeks of planning and framing followed. The second day for raising came. At its conclusion the great skeleton of the barn stood naked and slender and of striking proportions in its amplitude. Then came the boarding of the sides to the level of the second floor as well

as further planning and framing. A third day of raising came in due season and the frame of the structure to the eaves was complete; it was forty feet from the beams above the second floor to the ground at the base.

After the third story sides and ends were boarded the rafters were placed, roof boards from the old barns fitted and nailed for the covering and the shingling done. The outside of the new barn, save for the installation of the windows and the hanging of the doors, was done. It was ready for the beginning of its service, for the seasoning and the weathering of the years. Haying for the season was delayed but the crop for the year 1887 was stored in the new barn. Much work in finishing and adjustment remained to be done; by the late autumn, the barn was ready for winter's use—and it was the winter of the Great Blizzard.

Inside arrangements were the work of months to follow, some of them in later years. Two cattle stables were built, one on either side of the first floor at its west end. Later horse stalls and a harness room were finished on the level of the second floor at the southwest corner. Three flights of stairs, leading from the second floor to the basement, were installed. A grain room with bins and space for the corn sheller was arranged next to the stair landing on the upper floor. Spouts for piping the grain to the basement and for shooting liquid food to the hogs penned underneath the stables were put in. "Pitching holes" were made for the hay and other fodders so that they could fall from the lower floor to the basement for distribution, forkful by forkful, to the sheep and some of the cattle. One long shoot for hay started on the level of the upper floor. Everything which a pitchfork could handle went down, new mown hay when pitched from the loads and the daily supplies of winter feedings. Wise man was that father of mine in building a barn in which sensible structural arrangements and labor saving devices were actualities. Farmers who "knew a good thing when they saw it" marvelled with appreciation at handling methods which made for ease and convenience.

An important fact of the interior construction was the "turn table," place for turning the carts and wagons; even a load of hay on a two-wheeled ox cart could be turned. To the main floor was added the area of the fourth and fifth bents on the south side, making a total space twenty-eight by thirty feet free of all encumbrances. As barns go there was real uniqueness about this turn table. Carts and wagons were driven into barns but they were customarily backed out or driven through. Here was provision for driving out the same way

they came in, though in the opposite direction. It was never necessary for empty carts, wagons or carriages to be backed out; they could easily be turned and go out as they came in. Years of use registered this provision as a masterpiece of convenience.

And then there was the barn bridge necessary to span the distance from the edge of the garden's bank to the entrance of the upper floor. For a solid foundation at the garden's end of the bridge solid logs were piled one above the other and tied by other logs into the bank itself. Dirt back of the logs was pounded down as firmly as possible and all spaces filled back of the wall of logs. Long stringers, freshly cut from the nearby woods and hewn on their top sides, were thrown across the twenty feet of space between topmost bank log and the floor entrance. Like all flooring planks, those on the bridge were laid without spiking. Loads moving across might cause clatter but ease of removal and replacement was necessary.

During succeeding years dirt washed away was replaced carefully from time to time; something more permanent was needed. Eventually a substantial stone wall, of deeper foundation, higher to that extent, longer and wider, was laid. Skirting the wall at its southern end is a steep winding path, called "the boulevard," for horses to go up and down. This stone wall has had a permanence which has met the test of the years.

After a time, a corn barn, useful for many years, was built on the north side of the bridge. Before the construction of this necessary addition, and even afterwards, the hundreds of bushels of corn raised each year were stored in the long crib located on the north side of the garden. From this crib the ears of "corn on the cob," basket by basket, were carried into the grain room for shelling and later feeding.

The master builders were honest workmen with exactness and thoroughness characterizing their work. "By their fruits ye shall know them." As I type these words, sixty-two years later, I look down the valley for a mile from the window of the old house, our summer home for thirty-four years, and see the new barn, now an old barn, beautiful in its weathering of the years and standing as true to plumb line as in the year of its building. It has proved as staunch and strong for the use of the generations as any ship battling the winds and storms to be written about by the poet Longfellow or any other writer.

I was twelve years of age the year the barn was built and I was thrilled beyond words at the excitement of the raisings. There had been no similar event in the rural areas of the Town of Rockingham for

many years, if ever. Moreover, there was no such barn anywhere as the one my father built; at least, so it seemed to me and still does. On the days of the raisings I was in school where a twelve years' old boy should be. School out and I hustled home fast as my legs would carry me, running until out of breath and then stopping only long enough to get my wind. I purposed to lose no precious moments of thrilling excitement. In my limited experience such days would not recur.

I am thrilled now as I think of my father's dream come true. And he had another dream, that of his own boys, one or both of them, on the old farm using the barn which he had built. That dream did not come true. And yet it did but in another way. My brother, at thirteen years of age, had come with the family to the farm when it was purchased and had grown to manhood in the years of the old barns' uses. The year before the new barn was built he had married, left home and become the manager of a great farm a few miles up the valley on the New Hampshire side. He might come back in later years. I am sure my father must have had these high hopes. But my brother did not return. He spent his active years serving New England farmers by supplying them through solicitation and sales with needed machinery for varied purposes.

I was the second son, thirteen years younger than my brother. Yes, in my boyhood and youth I had no other thought than that of a farmer's life. But I must have more education than what the district school would furnish. High School years came on. How interesting education was! The call to college came and I went. Then came the call to the ministry, the years in the Divinity School and service to the churches. My father's hopes and plans had no fulfillment through my career.

But there was another generation and in the life of a grandson dreams did come true. From early boyhood the oldest grandchild, oldest son of the first born of four daughters, made plans for the old farm. Higher education for him meant preparation for modern farming, not for raising and fattening lambs but for dairying. In the year following my father's death he bought the family home and farmstead and, in a few years, built up a large herd of well blooded Guernseys and an extensive production of milk for distribution through a well organized dairy center at Bellows Falls. Improvements in house and barn took place, the meadow lands were scientifically cultivated and a third generation praised my father's foresight through well ordered activities.

The flowing Connecticut waters have other results than the laving

the banks of lovely and bountifully productive meadows. They furnish extensive and expanding hydro-electric power, a registry of gain in terms of industry, of loss in agricultural values. Right now the people of Vermont are thoroughly aware of the problems created by extending further privileges to power interests.

By act of the Vermont Legislature a charter was granted on November 1, 1791 to a "Company for Rendering Connecticut River Navigable by Bellows Falls." A second charter was granted on October 25, 1792 and by the Legislature of New Hampshire on December 18, 1792. A dam, canal and locks were built at Bellows Falls and the first boat passed through the locks in October, 1802. Though built for the purposes of navigation the canal from earliest days furnished power for mills of various kinds. Through the years a grist mill has held primary rights. Boats and rafts for lumber passed through the canal as late as 1858. Since 1870 utilization for power has been its specially marked feature. Numerous paper mills in years past have used its flowing waters for needed power. To increase the power from time to time the dam has been raised. That has meant settlements with land owners for flowage rights. From such a source twenty-four hundred dollars were available for constructing the new barn.

The great adjustment came in 1928. The dam was raised a dozen feet or so and hundreds, even thousands, of acres of meadow lands for many miles up the river on both its sides were completely flooded or despoiled for agriculture. The meadow lands of the old farm were pretty completely obliterated by the coverage of the waters, by becoming swamp lands or by being made inaccessible. The grandson sold out completely to the power company. Later he bought back the house, the barn and land around and attached to it, the little pasture south of the house and the hillside skirting the highway.

And now the old barn, unused for many years, new barn sixty years ago, stands as staunchly as in the days of its building. But its days are over. In quietness and dignity it stands a silent witness of useful activities of other times. It is a memorial of great years of dreaming, planning, building and convenience; it is a silent but substantial reminder of effective services for forty years and more. Its great sides and ends in beautifully weathered shades of brown, its massive roofs proclaim the earnest hopes, the creative purposes and the ample fruitage of my father's mature life.

Across the intervening fifty years and more comes vividly from the walls of memory the picture of my father seated in his old easy chair

at the eastern end of the upper floor of the barn which was peculiarly his in conception, building and use, in a favorite location for him in the summer time, quietly smoking his pipe, looking out upon the broad meadows beautifully spread out before him, his meadows and those of his neighbors, and watching his son at work, perhaps, with a pair of horses and mowing machine cutting the lush grass later to be carted as hay into the barn or seeing the hired men as they worked in the hay fields or pitched the hay by forkfuls on to the ox cart to be drawn into the barn. Again I see him upon a load of hay in the barn entering livingly into results of plans for which he himself was responsible by pitching the hay from the load, forkful by forkful, into the deep bay below while I or some one else kept the mow level as the piles rolled down upon us. A third picture is that of the winter season and he is carrying the hay, one fork load at a time, from the pile in the large square rack beneath the long scuttle leading from the floors above to the basement underneath, and distributing it carefully in the racks prepared for the feeding of the sheep. As enduring recollection brings him into view he was entering into his dreams and plans of the years and securing from them a solid satisfaction which meant to his life much of the best which this world had to offer. No wonder that we like to think that the life beyond is a going forward from the best that we have experienced in our present earthly life.

Edmunds Memorial Contest Essays

BEGINNINGS OF OLD BENNINGTON

By John W. Armstrong
North Bennington High School
First Prize 1949

Foreword

Cartier, the French navigator and explorer, was the first white man known to have gazed on the green-topped mountains of Vermont. That was in 1536. Seventy-five years later, Samuel de Champlain and Henry Hudson, gentlemen adventurers for different governments, touched the western boundaries of this state. But the mountains and valleys and rushing streams that lay between the Connecticut River on the east and Lake Champlain on the west remained a vast wilderness. This land, lying as it did between the English settlements to the east and south and the French settlements to the north and west, was disturbed only by storm and tempest, traveled only by wandering parties of savages and white men, who braved the wilderness to make war upon each other.

Not until 1724 did the white man impress upon this wilderness any sort of permanent landmark. In that year the English to the east laid out a series of rude forts or blockhouses along the west bank of the Connecticut River, as an added protection against sudden Indian attack. But westward and inland from the river the forest was still supreme.

About twenty-five years later, around 1755, Captain Samuel Robinson, a colonial English militia officer, veteran of more than one campaign in the wars with the French, was returning to his home in Massachusetts from the region of Lake George, and losing his way by mistaking the Walloomsac River for the Hoosac River, arrived on that pleasant valley site that was later to become the village known as "Old Bennington."

"In a pleasant glade,
With mountains round about environed,
And mighty woods, which did the valley shade,
And like a stately theatre it made,
Spreading itself into a spacious plain;
And in the midst a little river played."

—*Spenser* . . . AB 127.

ONE of the privileges of being a colonial governor was the power to make land grants. The land grants were supposed to encourage settlement in the back lands and were to be granted to actual colonists; men who would actually clear the land and erect some sort of home. In reality these land grants were primarily a form of land speculation. Benning Wentworth, a shrewd Portsmouth business man who had become Royal Governor of New Hampshire, had an eye to business when he granted to Colonel William Williams and others, a six mile square township, located west of the Green Mountain chain. This township, regularly laid out with a village center, plotted to contain sixty-four one-acre lots, and the rest of the township divided into sixty-four equal parts, was surveyed and laid out six miles from the Massachusetts line and twenty miles east of the Hudson River.

This township, so located, was to be named "Bennington," in honor of His Excellency, Benning Wentworth, Royal Governor of New Hampshire. The charter making the grant was dated January 3rd, 1749. The land was still a wilderness and so it remained, and in the meantime speculators bought and sold portions of it without ever seeing the actual land.

Even as a wilderness this township was a lovely place. In the south-west corner Mount St. Anthony rose some 2300 odd feet; in the north-west corner the crest of the Green Mountain chain rose even higher. Between these elevations were hills and vales and a spot of nearly level land on the banks of the Walloomsac River, a mountain-born stream that ran now swiftly, now slowly, across the entire township, until it lost itself in the wilds of "York" state.

Lovely this wilderness town-site was, and so it appeared to Captain Samuel Robinson, who, tracking eastward from an Indian foray on the shores of Lake George, ascended the Walloomsac and saw for the first time, at the skirts of Mt. Anthony, the lush and pleasant scene that seemed to him the "promised land." He determined to make his home there, and, if possible, to persuade others to settle there with

him. That was in 1755. Six years later, in 1761, under his hand, six families came to Bennington Township, among them that of his son, Samuel Robinson, Jr. They had found the owners and purchased a portion of the land, and tradition tells us that the Robinsons were the first to break ground in the new settlement and the first to erect a log cabin. There is today, on Monument Avenue in Old Bennington, a marker locating the site of that first rude dwelling.

There are many stories about that journey the new settlers made when they first came to make their homes in the wilderness. They tell about the foresight of Samuel Robinson, who purchased wheat and other staples and necessities for the founding of the new settlement. They tell about the ladies, who, making the journey on horseback, raced as they neared the Bennington line to see who would be the first to enter the township.

The new proprietors exercised the democratic principles of their New England heritage even before the town proper was organized. They held public meetings to determine property lines, location of roads and the like. Among the first buildings of a public nature to be authorized were a meeting house and a grist and saw mill. We find the date of the first grist and saw mills to be 1763. The grist mill was on the east bank of the Walloomsac, near what is now the corner of Beech and Main streets. The saw mill was on the west bank opposite, near what is now the corner of Main and Morgan streets. The mill-dam was on the south branch of the Walloomsac.

We read that at this date, 1763, there were at least two taverns in the township, namely, those of John Fassett and Hendrick Schneider. The Schneider Tavern was known later as Herrick's Tavern and at a still later period was known as Dimmick's Stand. The old tavern had many historic associations and today there is a marker locating the site.

Of that first old meeting house that played such an important part in the town's early history, the exact date of its building is not known. It is known, however, that it was in use in 1766. Many were the memories attached to that old building, for it served at various times, as school, town hall, church and hospital. A remarkable painting picturing this old meeting house at the time of the Battle of Bennington now hangs in the Bennington Historical Museum.

By 1765 it appears that there were about sixty-seven families and about the same number of dwelling places in Bennington. That year a road was surveyed and opened that connected Bennington with the new settlements around Otter Creek, which were to be known later as Danby.

The full story of the exploits of Ethan Allen and his "Green Mountain Boys," has been told and re-told many times. The story of the Battle of Bennington has been recorded many times from every viewpoint and angle. Benningtonians and visitors with a history-gathering bent are constantly reminded of these and other important events in Bennington's history by the many beautiful historic buildings still existing in and about the village. Indeed, it is a rare day in the summer-time when one doesn't see one or another of the historic landmarks being photographed.

The Walloomsac Inn is, perhaps, most worthy of leading the list. Built in 1766, by Captain Elijah Dewey, eldest son of the famous parson, it is still in service today, after one hundred and eighty-three years of continuous catering to the public.

To pick out the leader of the pre-revolutionary homes about town doesn't require a second thought from a Benningtonian. It is the "Parson Dewey House." Built immediately after the first saw mill was established here, it is undoubtedly the "oldest house in Vermont," and furthermore it was built, in part at least, by the famous and patriotic Parson Dewey. That he was an active and stalwart man is testified by the fact that he fathered fourteen children, six of them after his fiftieth year.

Of the post-revolutionary Old First Church of which Benningtonians are so justly proud, not too much can be said either by way of description or history. It must be seen to be appreciated, and then again, one is reminded, "A thing of beauty is a joy forever."

There are a full score of pre-revolutionary and post-revolutionary homes in and around Bennington. Of these, to mention a few, are the two Hubbell homesteads, the two Robinson homes on Monument Avenue, The Asa Hyde house, the Tichenor mansion, the two Dewey houses, the Peter Harwood house and the Hezekiah Armstrong homestead.

In 1871, a group of boys playing with an old foot-warmer they had found in one of the chambers, ignited a fire and caused a disasterous blaze that swept away the hundred and five year old "Catamount Tavern," renowned in history and a most colorful relic if there ever was one. Built in 1766, by Stephen Fay, it was known variously as "Fay's Tavern," the "Green Mountain Inn," and finally as the "Catamount Tavern."

The Harwood Tavern, later known as the "State Arms House," was another historic landmark that passed away under the hand of time and progress. The original building was the famous colonial

arms storehouse (hence the name "State Arms" at a later date) in 1777.

Of the other old taverns mention should be made of the Harmon Inn, where General Stark breakfasted on his way to scatter the Hessians under Baum, and the "State Line Tavern," built by "Tory" Matthews after the Revolution. The "State Line Tavern" is in business today, after one hundred and sixty-nine years. It has not always served as a tavern, but doubled as a private home at intervals.

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GREEN MOUNTAIN FOLKLORE

By Carol LeVarn
Richmond High School

Second Prize 1949

In one quiet Green Mountain village there is a sixteen-sided church, built nearly round in this unconventional fashion that the devil might have no corners in which to hide. This is a fine example of Vermont folklore, the subject which lends so much spice to the history of our state. For too long historians have dwelt upon things and big people, placing insufficient emphasis upon the little people who have made Vermont what she is and upon the stories and customs which have made Vermont's little people what they are. In the varied phases of folklore are reflected the traits of Vermonters down through the years—their joys and sorrows, wisdom and folly.

Recently, however, there has been increased interest in the folklore of this region. Invaluable information has been discovered, nearly-forgotten stories written down for future generations and a new side of Vermont's history revealed. Pioneers in this movement have included Leon Dean, Helen Hartness Flanders, Arthur Wallace Peach, members of the Vermont Folklore Society and of UVM's adult education classes in Vermont folklore, and many, many others who have contributed, perhaps unknowingly, to the stockpile of Green Mountain folktales.

The term "folklore," as explained by Professor Peach in a recent publication, is derived from the Anglo-Saxon "folc," meaning folk, and "lar," learning. In those two words are expressed a wealth of meaning.

Examples of all divisions of folklore are readily found in the lore of the Green Mountains. For instance, what Vermont town lacks at least one *local character?* There was Charlie Haskell, whose "largest general store in the world" in Wolcott was the birthplace of many a tale. Another storekeeper, Perry Bond of Danby, was perhaps even more of a character, one of the type we Vermonters call "so tight he squeaks when he walks."

Perry's full name, painted in huge letters on the sign which hung above the store, was P. G. Bond, a temptation which always proved too great for local youngsters on Hallowe'en, when an "I" was invariably inserted between the initials, despite Perry's efforts to the contrary.

Also into the section dealing with fabulous Vermonters fall stories about *peddlers and tricksters*. There is one tale involving Charlie Haskell which belongs in this category. It concerned an eager drummer who had not long held his position. Dressed to the teeth in a cut-away coat, spats and kid gloves, he came to Charlie's store one day, waiting for one of the regular salesmen to finish before beginning his "canned" sales talk, which he concluded with the phrase the company had taught him, "How many shall I send you, Mr. Haskell?"

Charlie spat. "Wall, don't know as I want any."

The young salesman added one more paragraph which, he had been assured, never failed. Then he pulled out his pad and pencil once more. "Now how many of these shall I send you, Mr. Haskell?"

Whereupon Charlie drawled, "Tell you what I'll do, young feller. When I want some I'll drap ye a pust cahd."

"But you don't know where to reach me, Mr. Haskell."

Charlie looked him over from top hat to spats. "Yes, I do," he said. "The Waldorf Astory!"

As to *local strongmen and tall-tale experts*, the Green Mountain State has had more than her share of both. Exaggerated accounts of Vermont snowstorms have been heard in many forms and shapes for years. While there are some who would place the human hibernation stories in the tall-tale class, there are many grandparents who swear that they recall the practice of freezing up elderly people for the winter months, thawing them out once more in the spring, when they would emerge healthy and happy after their long nap.

The Lake Champlain sea serpent tales, which are gradually becoming accepted as folklore, are an example of the *wonders of the invisible world* class. An account in an early almanac describes the animal as 130 feet long, having a head three feet in circumference.

Tales about just one of Vermont's most colorful figures, the Ethan Allen stories, afford much folklore on *historical traditions*, a classification which, in Vermont, corresponds with the Daniel Webster stories of New Hampshire and stories such as "Skipper Ireson's Ride" in Massachusetts.

An outstanding example is the story of what Ethan retorted to a group of sheet-clad friends, sent by his wife, who were determined to frighten him into a state of sobriety one evening when he was returning from Bennington in an extremely intoxicated condition. Said Ethan to the weird assembly, who had burst forth from a hiding place beneath a bridge, "Do you be angels, I'm proud to meet you. Do you be divils, then come along with me. I married your sister!"

Place lore in Vermont takes many forms. It may concern names, events which took place at a certain spot, or persons involved. Many Green Mountain towns and sections of towns, such as Goose Green, Turkey Hill, or Skunk Hollow, have interesting or humorous stories concerning their names.

A former Alburg resident tells a story, never before made public, about the naming of one of the islands. The story deals with Cloak Island, a small piece of land off Isle La Motte. The episode from which the island received its name concerned an elderly member of a family of early settlers on Isle La Motte. One day Granny Fisk was missing and a thorough search revealed no trace of the old lady. An old superstition known to the island dwellers said that if the cloak of one believed drowned were placed on the water, it would come to rest over the body of its owner. Granny Fisk's cloak, placed on the water, did not rest but floated and caught among the bushes on the shore of the island which now bears its name. The legend has it that Granny Fisk turned up later in Champlain, New York, where it was said her sons had swapped her for a gray mare and a sawmill, but the name of Cloak Island lives on.

The power of faith in Vermont folktales is illustrated by the stories of Rock Dunder, which the Indians knew as Regioghne, the Great Spirit. One manner in which the *force* of custom is illustrated locally is through Green Mountain recipes and eating customs. For example, one practice, little known in other sections, is that of complementing sugar-on-snow with dill pickles, egg sandwiches, and doughnuts. Chicken pie suppers are much more common here than in other areas. Still other illustrations are found in sugaring and farming customs, hay-roping providing an example of the latter, barn-raising and cider-making practices, and forked stick water-witching which, despite the scoffs of experts, nearly always works for a true Vermonter. Many things done in connection with country auctions have become Vermont customs through the course of years. Early remedies, such as wearing a nutmeg around the neck to cure sore throat, have become custom with many modern Vermonters. And there are leisure customs as well as workday practices. A recent book describes a favorite pastime of early Vermonters—that of gambling on the cricket box. A live cricket was placed in a closed box. Each participant then contributed a certain sum to the kitty and placed his initials near one of the holes which was cut in the top of the box. Whoever claimed the hole through which the cricket crawled first received the kitty.

Yankeeisms are found in proper names, the biblical names often

seen on gravestones for instance, or in local pronunciations and dialects. Vermont is, according to Charles Crane, divided by the Green Mountains into two linguistic sections, which have distinct speech differences. The short "o" which is common in eastern Vermont is little heard in the western part of the state, and while the flat "a" is universal in the western section, the eastern side uses a broad "a."

Recently Muriel Hughes has done much research on *folk-say*, coming up with such apt expressions as "awkward as a hog on ice" and "homely enough to stop a down train." Rowland Robinson lists expressions once common to this area. Among them were "square room" for the parlor, "heft" for the weight or the greater part of a thing.

Also into this class falls the epitaph, which may express pathos, retribution from the grave, or humor. For instance the classic:

> "Here lies our darling baby boy;
> He neither screams nor hollers.
> He lived but four and twenty days
> And cost us forty dollars."

Part five is perhaps the division upon which most research has been done in this state. Helen Hartness Flanders has in her collection at Middlebury over 7000 examples of previously unrecorded *ballads*, some of which have come down from old European songs and some dealing with local events. "Springfield Mountain" is one of the best known examples of the latter, its theme having been included in symphonic works.

The folk-drama, livened with folk music and dances, is coming into its own in America and much may be done with Green Mountain ballads. Folk-dances such as "Devil's Dream," "Birdie in the Cage," and "Butterfly Whirl" are becoming increasingly popular in urban as well as rural areas. Vermonters, having lived close to their native soil for generations, have long realized the possibilities of such forms of recreation, necessitating no revival of folk-dances here, since they have never suffered a decrease in popularity.

Under the *rhymes and jingles* class, that category which is the folk-lore of children includes such divisions as counting-out rhymes, rope-skipping, ball-bouncing, or tickling rhymes. Other types of jingles concern the weather and its prognostication, election campaigns, and rhymes for many occasions.

Vermont has much occupational folklore, such as that which comes from the sugar-bush, lumber camp, or the lake boat.

All together they comprise the customs and ways of Vermont's little people and serve to mirror as well as the brightest mountain stream their courage, their smiles and tears, their hopes and despairs. And, in a state which *is* little people, there can be nothing more important.

COVERED BRIDGES IN VERMONT

By Theodore Courier
Montpelier High School

Third Prize 1949

The present generation does not know the thrill of galloping through a resounding covered bridge after nightfall, sped by the real or imaginary dangers lurking in the blackness. Nor does it realize the important role which the wooden bridge played in the development of America.

It is a long journey in miles and years from the first covered bridge over the Euphrates River in Babylon, 783 B.C. to the oldest covered bridges in this country. There is something about the sturdy antiquity and homely practicality of a covered bridge which appeals to one. These bridges may be found in every part of the land, but in Vermont, where there are more than in all the rest of the New England states, are some of the earliest bridges and countless examples of the various types of structure.

Today the covered bridge appeals to us as something of interest from earlier days. We cherish it not so much for its beauty as for its quaint charm. It is symbolic of the hardiness of our forefathers who built it by hand and of the greatness of our country which has so out grown the covered bridge in the last few generations.

Who has not felt the magic of times gone by, in passing through a covered bridge? The picturesque roof, the clattering planks—how all these things play upon the imagination! Perhaps one sees in fancy the scenes of long ago; the loads of hay and grain drawn by ox teams with slow and measured tread; the herds of sheep and kine guided by barefoot boys in the calm summer twilight.

Covered bridges did not originate for their beauty but for their usefulness. Lumber was plentiful, the brooks and rivers must be traversed; hence the wooden bridge. The first wooden bridges in Vermont were made by placing two logs across the stream and floor-

ing with poles. Then followed the boarded open bridge like the one at Dover. Observant bridge builders realized that these structures needed protection as the tall trusses forming the sides were blown into a leaning position. The cure was to be found in overhead bracing. This framework needed protection from the rain and so the covered bridge came into being, protected against the weather by boarded sides and shingled roof like the familiar barn. An early Scottish traveler, writing of his American experiences, comments, "The people of New England have the surprising custom of building wood-sheds on top of their bridges."[1]

This development took place in the early eighteen hundreds and caused much discussion as to whether the longer life of the bridge would make up for the extra cost. By 1810 everyone was agreed that the covered bridge was worth the price and practically all bridges were built that way. The roof performed another duty besides protecting the timber of the bridge from decay; it also stiffened the entire bridge, making it safer as well as more durable. Many of the plain wooden bridges were changed to covered bridges and these remodeled bridges can be identified today by the very light framework on the sides which holds up the roof. One of these made-over bridges may be seen at Danville.

Richard S. Allen of Round Lake, New York, has been collecting material on covered wooden bridges for several years and has compiled a census of them covering the entire country. Of course, the figures change very rapidly with highway improvement; nevertheless it is an interesting guide. We learn from it that Vermont has more covered bridges still in use than all the rest of the New England states put together, even if New Hampshire gets credit for half of those that cross the Connecticut river to us. Vermont is in fourth place among the whole United States. Ohio leads with 609 bridges and new ones being built all the time. Pennsylvania is second with 336, Indiana third with 202, and Vermont has 170 in use and a few which are abandoned to traffic but are used for storing road equipment. One of these is across First Branch at Royalton.[2]

Gathering historical facts about covered bridges is difficult. Records are not specific; for instance which is "the bridge at the falls" when there are cascades at each end of the village? Colonel Hale's

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1 Congdon, Herbert Wheaton, *The Covered Bridge*, Stephen Daye Press, Brattleboro, Vermont, 1941, p. 66.

2 Fletcher, Robert and Snow, J. P., *History of the Development of Wooden Bridges* (pamphlet), American Society of Civil Engineers, New York, 1934, p. 22.

bridge at Bellows Falls seems to have a very authentic and logical record. It was the first bridge to span the Connecticut river and was a great engineering feat. Enoch Hale, born in Massachusetts in 1735, settled in Ringe, New Hampshire in 1765. He became prominent in that town and secured a charter to build a bridge. He moved to Walpole, New Hampshire, opposite Bellows Falls, and the bridge was built to connect the two towns. It was completed in 1785, just two years after the close of the Revolutionary War.

Colonel Hale chose a narrow place in the river where a rock-reef rises from the rushing waters of the falls, placing his middle pier on the reef for a firm foundation. However the other two spans were so long that everyone for miles around regarded it as a foolhardy experiment. At its completion it was hailed as an engineering triumph and of great importance commercially, for it opened the Vermont region to trade in Boston and other coastal cities. The bridge was 365 feet long and the floor was 50 feet above the water.[3]

It would be interesting to know which of Vermont's bridges is the oldest. Evidence points to Pulpmill bridge, Otter Creek, Middlebury-Weybridge is at least fifteen years older than any of which there are authentic records. It is believed that the bridge was built in the early eighteen hundreds and was owned and operated as a toll bridge by the Waltham Turnpike Company, which was dissolved in 1828. This is a double lane bridge, and there is only one other in Vermont and probably not over six or seven elsewhere.

The village bridge in Waitsfield is known to have been completed in 1833. It spans Mad river at the Big Eddy, one end resting on a great ledge. Built of well seasoned spruce, it stands today much as it was built except for improvements such as an attached sidewalk and hole cut in the boarding of the sides to admit daylight thought necessary by moderns.

There is rather an interesting story connected with the Hammond bridge in Pittsford. This bridge spans Otter Creek which winds sluggishly through level fields for many miles. In such terrain there is no chance for flood waters to run off. During the flood of 1927 the stream rose higher and higher, spreading far out into the meadows. At last the old bridge felt "the thrill of life along her keel" and was floated off the abutments, a clumsy ark. The voyage was a short one, a mile and a half, when the bridge caught in the banks. When the flood was over the people of the town were delighted to find the bridge had not been carried away but merely misplaced. Empty oil

[3] Congdon, *Op. cit.*, p. 25.

barrels were lashed to the structure and it was slowly towed up stream and reset on new and higher abutments. There is little traffic on this quiet road and the bridge should serve for many years to come.

Many Vermont bridges were moved from their foundations in that terrible flood of 1927. Some were reset on abutments far from where they started, while others were taken apart and rebuilt. Those too completely wrecked were used as sources of material for temporary bridges. Much of the rest went into the construction of new barns. There was little salvaged from the modern bridges. Huge masses of concrete were a complete loss. Twisted steel was often buried under tons of boulders. The old wooden bridges had shown their investment value again. It set some highway engineers to thinking that perhaps they had real value aside from sentiment.

If one were to make a special study of all the covered bridges in this section of the country, he would find that they differ greatly in pattern and method of construction. Early bridges had no fixed pattern. They were built by some carpenter in the locality; built to serve a purpose with no regard for line or beauty. Later the builders began to take more pride in their work and, wishing to use some method of adornment, developed low overhanging eaves, differently shaped arches, and in various ways changed the pattern, making many different kinds of bridges.

These covered bridges are used not only on highways but also on railroads. Vermont has six of the twenty-nine railroad covered bridges in the country. The Pioneer Junction bridge in Barre is the only one on the Montpelier Wells River road. The St. Johnsbury and Lake Champlain railroad has the other five. Railroad covered bridges are usually ungainly in proportion; being only one tract wide and very high detracts from their lines of beauty. The engineer who planned the bridge near Barre was a skilled designer and gave much distinction to the design. The bridge at Hardwick, whether by accident or a sense of humor, has an amazing resemblance to a railroad car. The longest covered railroad bridge is at Swanton, a three span bridge with three ventilators on the top to carry away the smoke. An interesting fact about the railroad bridges is that they are not really old, having been built in the nineteen hundreds.[4]

There are many sordid tales connected with the gloomy shelter of covered bridges. The Billings bridge, near Rutland, has a long list of crimes and of violence connected with it. Situated in a lonely spot,

4 Wagemann, Clara, *Covered Bridges of New England*, Tuttle Company, Rutland, Vermont, 1931, pp. 8–12.

it served as an excellent hideout for highwaymen. Stories are told of at least three murders being committed in this bridge, however most of the stories of our covered bridges are less gloomy. One is told of the shapely small bridge at Albany which crosses Black River at the foot of a steep hill, where the road makes a sharp turn. Web Eldrige, a tin smith with a peg leg and an impediment in his speech, had been to buy a pig. With the pig in a basket on the seat beside him, he was coming down the hill when something on the harness broke. The frightened horse ran, completely out of control, as the heavy wagon banged on him. Web told the story later in a country store saying, "Says I to myself," says I, "I'll never make that turn in Trist's world." He didn't. The whole outfit went straight ahead into the river. After his friends had pulled man, horse, and pig out of the water with no serious damage, Web piped up, "By funder gimme my pig, I'm going hom."

George Aiken, United States senator from Vermont, tells of a farmer who had been urged by his wife for months to get a new suit of clothes. One day he took some farm produce to the village hotel and received such a good price for it that he decided to surprise and please his wife by buying a new suit. He found what he wanted, bought it and put the bundle in the back of the buggy. On his way home he decided to change into the new suit. He stopped the horse in the dusk of the covered bridge, stripped off the old ragged clothes, threw them through a hole in the side of the bridge and reached for the bundle in the back of the wagon. It was gone. It had bobbed out somewhere along the road. He was forced to drive home clad only in his under clothes. He surprised his wife but he did not please her.

In the gay nineties covered bridges offered excellent opportunities for free publicity, and even today you will find old patent medicine, tobacco, grocery and other advertisements and the remains of ancient circus posters decorating interiors and weatherboarded wall spaces just inside the entrances, while interior cross timbers still carry the business notices of local merchants. Also conspicuous above entrance portals or on the sides of them are "Horses at a walk" signs and warnings that there will be a—"Two dollar fine for crossing this bridge faster than a walk." The coming of the automobile produced the familiar metal sign—"Speed limit, horses at a walk, motor vehicles 10 miles per hour."

To the admirer of these romantic and interesting structures, Vermont offers the ideal hunting ground. Here you will find bridges across wild, tumbling mountain brooks, broad rivers and placid

streams in surroundings of gorgeous Green Mountain peaks, charming country villages, lush green meadows and characteristic farms. True, you will have to leave the main travelled cement highways where they no longer stand but good gravel roads lead to all, and with the exception of the private bridge in Highgate over Rock River and the diminutive private covered foot bridge spanning Dog River at Northfield Falls you may drive your car to and through all of them with ease and safety. The recently published Vermont Covered Bridge Map, issued by the State Highway Department at Montpelier, plots the approximate location of every remaining bridge and one will have little trouble finding them today.

Our covered bridges are fast disappearing. They are sturdy structures, and well have they stood the test of time. Save for flood, fire, and deliberate destruction by highway officials to give way for modern structures, the covered bridges still stand as historic land marks. Shall we keep them? Shall we build more covered bridges? Or shall we sacrifice that charm, that magic, that link which binds us to an earlier, simpler way of life?

> Some part of life becomes oblivion;
> Something with roots deep buried in the heart
> Of simple folk is lost, as one by one,
> These pioneers of other days depart.
> Only the country folk, whose careless tread
> Endears a dusty road, can ever know
> The peaceful, clattering joy of rude planks spread
> Above a drowsy creek that gleams below.
> Here was a refuge from the sudden showers
> That swept like moving music field and wood,
> And here cool, tunnelled dark when sultry hours
> Danced with white feet beyond the bridge's hood . . .
> Yet there are soulless men whose hand and brain
> Tear down what time will never give again.[5]

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Notes and Documents

THE HISTORY OF THE BROOKFIELD LIBRARY

By Madaleen Ellis

Libraries are an integral part of every community. Books, to many people, are as life-giving food and shelter. They mean freedom, the type of freedom gained in no other way. Books, the right kind, are a sign of thinking people, of people desirous to learn, to be educated.

It is deeply significant then, that scarcely was the ink dry on their town charter before the residents of the new town of Brookfield formed a library, the first public library in the state of Vermont.

In March, 1791, Vermont entered the union as the fourteenth state. In the same month Brookfield, with a population of less than 400, received its charter. On June 7 of the same year, a group met in the township to form a library association "To promote usefull Knowledge and Piety" as stated in the articles of the association.

It is difficult to piece together the complete story of the library. Fortunately, the first articles and the early minutes of meetings are fairly complete and still in good condition. Also, the older residents of the town are able to remember bits of information passed down from one generation to another.

The articles were drawn up on this date, June 7, and the company formed with sixty-six subscribers setting their name and seal to the agreement. Each man present paid into the common treasury sixteen shillings or the equivalent of $2.67, as the price of his share.

It was agreed that meetings would be held "one in each three months" with an annual meeting in June of each year. A committee would be chosen each year to care for the books, adjudge damages and to keep a record of members in arrears. Fines of two shillings were to be charged for all people who did not return their books within the allotted time.

Also, it was written that no proprietor could sell his share in the company without the full approval of said company and if any book were loaned to another family the proprietor caught in such an act

would be duly fined. An interesting sidelight, was the fact that no ladies were permitted at the quarterly meetings, though early catalogues carried titles of books "suitable for female instruction and education."

Among the first subscribers were men of note in town affairs. Some of the names are still present in the town records of 1949. Perhaps the ten subscribers best known were, Elisha Allis, whose descendant gave to the state, Allis Park, located in Brookfield; Daniel Kingsbury, Experience Fisk, Ben Coult, Nathaniel Wheatley, all of whom have descendants living in the town today; Elijah Lyman, first minister of Brookfield and his brother John; Timothy Cowles, the first town clerk; Abner Pride, who reputedly kicked the Prince of Wales when the Prince was on a visit in Brookfield and the famous Zadock Steele of the Royalton raid.

Officers for the organization included a clerk, treasurer, librarian and auctioneer. The first clerk was Moses Hubbard, the first treasurer, Noah Paine and the first librarian, Elisha Allis. There is no record stating the designated auctioneer and it is not positively known who the early auctioneers were. The first committee consisted of Ezra Hexion, Rufus Glysson, John Herrick and E. E. Benham with Elijah Lyman the chairman.

A careful search of the early records reveal no statement concerning the number of books but it is definitely known that by 1835 there were over 800 volumes. Sermons and other religious material far outnumbered other subjects but books of history and geography were high on the list which included two volumes of the works of William Shakespeare and a book entitled, "Cook's Travels." The Reverend Elijah Lyman was very helpful in this enterprise, giving to the library several volumes from his own library, all on the subject of religion. These books are still intact today and can be found in the present town library.

Quarterly meeting day was a day of visiting and enjoyment for the whole family. Although the women could not attend the actual meetings they accompanied their husbands to them, busying themselves with their knitting, gossip and the preparation of a communal dinner. The meetings formally beginning at eleven in the morning, never really got under way until one in the afternoon, when the actual auctioneering of books was held, each book going to the highest bidder. At each meeting there were always some books to be retired and the lucky bidders carried these home for good.

The idea for this type of library, which is rather unique, is believed

to have come from Southampton, Massachusetts, where such an organization was in existence for six or seven years prior to 1791. Several early settlers of Brookfield came from Southampton and surrounding towns. It has been definitely established that settlers going to Gilmanton, Wisconsin from Braintree, Brookfield and Randolph carried the library idea with them and the library in its original still flourishes in Gilmanton.

The Library Company continued as organized until 1916, in later years under the name of the Brookfield Social Library. At the annual town meeting, March 2, 1915, the town voted to accept state aid in order to form a free public library. At the same time they elected five trustees for the new library, the Reverend William Taylor, Mrs. Laura Hood, George Sprague, Mrs. Myrtie Perham and Mrs. Wallace Colt, whose husband was a descendant of the first Ben Coult.

Apparently, though the independent library still existed, it worked in close conjunction with the new, free public library, for in the minutes of the annual meeting, June 7, 1916, just 125 years to the day after its founding, the secretary wrote "Books were taken from the library today free." Each word was underlined.

However, it was not until September 30, 1916, that the Independent Library Society passed a resolution to merge with the Free Public Library. On October 9, 1916, the trustees of the Free Library voted to accept this resolution and new articles were drawn up, which with their amendments are in use today. Thus, the old library merged with the new without a break in continuity.

The first books were kept in a small chest under the bar in the tavern owned by Amasa Edson in Brookfield Center. The chest reposes today in the library room still holding several of Reverend Lyman's books. The tavern is still in existence but now as a private dwelling.

At some later date the books were moved to a private home, probably that of the librarian or auctioneer. This practice was abandoned soon after the building of a new church in the Center in 1845. From then until the early 1900's, the books were kept in the basement of the church which was also used as a town hall and general social center for many years.

About 1900, the town hall in Brookfield Village was built by the Masonic Order. Shortly thereafter, the Library Society rented from the Masons a small room in the basement overlooking the lake, to be used as a library room. The quarterly meetings were hereafter held in the dining hall adjoining the library room.

By 1938, with approximately 4000 volumes owned by the library and additional books loaned by the state, the room was badly overcrowded and the realization formed that something had to be done.

About this time, an elderly lady, Mrs. Eleanor Clark, died, bequeathing her house to her niece, Mrs. Anna Clark Jones, a native of Brookfield, who had graduated from UVM, married a well-known botanist and returned to Brookfield only for the summers but retaining a very active interest in town affairs.

Mrs. Jones, in the summer of 1938, gave the house to the town and plans were made to create a town clerk's office and library in the building. Renovation started immediately and in the fall of 1939 the library moved to its permanent new home.

Housed in one end of the old house, which stands on a small hill, the library is an attractive low-ceilinged room with a soft rug on the floor, cream-colored walls and several shelves of Mexican pottery and dolls presented by Mrs. Jones. The sun streams in the windows from morning until night and from the front windows can be seen a beautiful view of the small lake and floating bridge. Open every Friday afternoon from one until five, it is a far-cry from the old chest under the bar. Today there are about 5900 volumes in the library, supplemented by books received from the state book wagon every two months.

The library receives its entire financial support from the town which appropriates $125 annually for its use. The only state aid received is in the form of book loans, advice on the retiring of books, etc.

In the summer of 1948, the trustees of the library placed in the library a plaque with the following inscription, "The Brookfield Free Public Library erects this tablet to commemorate the generosity of Anna Clark Jones, who gave this building to the town in 1938."

So for 158 years the library, in one form or another has continued "to promote usefull Knowledge and Piety" and "to further the education and instruction of all interested Peoples."

RULES AND REGULATIONS OF THE SOCIAL LIBRARY OF DUMMERSTON, VERMONT

Among a number of manuscript documents relating to Dummerston affairs before and after 1790, and preserved apparently by my ancestor Ichabod Knapp, Constable and Collector for Dummerston in 1791, are what appear to be the original manuscript regulations of the first Social or Circulating Library of that town. These regulations, here printed for the first time, are of considerable interest both to librarians, and to social historians of the late eighteenth century. They also furnish entertainment to less professional readers.

The manuscript, which I am placing on loan with the Vermont Historical Society, consists of a single sheet 15½ inches by 11¾ inches folded in folio format. Unfortunately the document is without date. The stationery bears the watermark of a fish, a bit of evidence which may suggest an approximate date to special students of British or colonial paper-manufacturing. However, the references to shillings and pence in the regulations would date them before 1800, and the allusion to the "Meeting House" indicates obviously that they were drawn up sometime after 1775, when the church was built.

It is quite possible that we have here the regulations of the first Vermont Social or Circulating Library, though Charles Crane in Let Me Show You Vermont, *(p. 291) has assigned that honor to Brookfield, which, he asserts, founded its library in 1791. This problem of priority we must pass on to those in closer contact with relevant source-materials than we are, at present. Consequently, without further introduction, we present the contents of the document as drawn up by the original Proprietors, with all their painstaking recognition of legal contingency and of the potential depravity of readers then and now.*

Lewis M. Knapp

Colorado Springs, Colo.

The Institution and Records of the Social Library in Dummerston in the County of Windham, in the State of Vermont.

We the Subscribers (Proprietors) of the Social Library in Dummerston have Associated for the purpose of procuring a collection of useful and entertaining Books [and] Do mutually agree to the following Rules and regulations (vizt)[:]

1. Each Person becoming a Proprietor shall pay to the Treasurer the Value of one Right in the Library, vizt Twelve Shillings[.]

2. Rights in the Library may be Transfer'd, and any person may own one or more Rights, and each right shall be intitled to one Vote in all matters concerning the Library, but there never shall be more than one owner to one Right[.]

3. For the well ordering the concerns of the Library, there shall be a Committee consisting of a Chairman and four others; a Treasurer & Librarian, who shall be Chosen by a Majority, and continue in Office during pleasure[.]

4. The Chairman shall preside at all Meetings of the Proprietors and of the Committee; and in his Absence the Oldest person present belonging to the Committee shall preside[.]

5. The Committee on the first Tuesday of May annually and oftener if they see fit shall inspect the Library, the Librarian's accounts and the Accounts of the Treasurer, they shall whenever they please, receive what Mony may be in the Treasury, and lay out the same as they may Judge most for the Benefit of the Library, they shall be accountable to the Proprietors, and may call a Meeting of them whenever they think it expedient[.]

6. The Treasurer shall Officiate as Collector, he shall receive all monies raised for the Benifit of the Library, shall render an Account of the same to the Committee when requested, and shall in no case, pay out any monies, except to the Committee or their order[.]

7. The Librarian shall Officiate as Clerk, he shall take the care of the Library, shall render a faithful account of the same, to the Committee when requested[.] And in case the Books shall be injured while in his hands he shall pay as much mony as the Committee shall Judge equal to the Damage, to be Collected of him by the Committee in the same manner, as shall be directed for the Librarian to collect of the proprietors, he shall receive all fines for not returning of—or detaining—Lending or Damaging the Books and shall pay over the same to the Treasurer, quarterly, and oftener if requested and in case of unreasonable Damage done to the Books, where the fine is not expressly determined by any article in this Institution the Librarian shall annex such penalty as he shall Judge equal to the Damage, from whose decision any proprietor, thinking himself aggrieved may appeal to the Committee, who shall determine the same[.] He shall attend to the taking out and returning Books on the first Tuesdays of every Month and shall not be Obliged to attend at any other time[.]

8. No person shall detain a Book longer than until the second day

appointed for taking out and returning Books after taking out, and every Book shall be returned to the Librarian on the first Tuesday of May annually[.]

9. No Proprietor shall take out more than One Book to one Right at a time nor lend any Book belonging to the Library to any person out of his House or Family[.]

10. If any Proprietor shall loose [*sic*] a Book he shall pay to the Librarian the prime cost of the same—and if it be one of a sett he shal pay to the Librarian, as much mony as the Committee shall Judge equal to the Damage[.]

11. The Fine for not returning a Book at the time shall be one shilling, to increase nine pence p^r^ Week during the time of Detention, for lending a Book the prime Cost, for turning down a Leaf four pence, for droping [*sic*] a drop of Tallow into a Book four pence[.]

12. Whenever any person neglects to return a Book or pay any sum to the Treasurer, or Librarian which by this institution he ought to pay, he shall not be permitted to take out any Book until the same be paid, and when the fine shall amount to four shillings that with the Book shall be called for by the Librarian in a Legal way, and in case the Librarian shall think the proprietors to be in danger of suffering Loss by any persons being about to abscond he shall have power to call whenever he thinks necessary, and if necessary the Librarian shall have power to apply to the Civil Authority to which (in case of delinquency) We individually hold ourselves subject for the fulfilment of all Articles that shall or may be legally adopted by the proprietors[.]

13. Every proprietor shall pay nine pence to the Treasurer half yearly (viz) on the first Tuesdays of May and november to be laid out for the Benifit of the Library[.]

14. The Librarian shall have a Right to conven[e] the Committee whenever he thinks proper to attend to the Concerns of the Library[.] He shall warn all meeting both of proprietors & Committee by posting up a Notification in writing at the Meeting House and three other of the most publick places in Town at least three days before the time appointed for meeting, and whenever any seven of the proprietors shall make Application to Warn a meeting he shall do it[.]

15. The proprietors shall have power to make such alterations in this institution at their regular meetings as they shall think best[.]

Folklore Department

Edited by Leon W. Dean
President, Green Mountain Folklore Society

A Bear Tail

Nathaniel Johnson had followed the big bear tracks all the forenoon. They finally led him to the clearing near the three-sided sugar house. Leaning his gun against a maple tree, he sat down on a stump, took a piece of corn bread from his pocket and gazed thoughtfully down the valley. At a slight rustle of the bushes behind him, he turned abruptly. There stood the bear about a rod away beside the tree against which he had leaned his gun. In that little clearing there were no small trees to which he could dash for safety. His quick glance noted a large barrel turned bottom-side-up near the sugar house, a barrel which had been used the spring before to hold surface water for the soaking of the wooden sap buckets. Soon Nathaniel was under that barrel peering out through a crack at the bear, who had begun to sniff and growl around his hiding place. The animal circled the barrel twice and then clumsily climbed on top, where she evidently decided to remain. Carefully poking his finger through the bunghole, Nathaniel hooked it around the bear's tail and drew it inside. Then with one quick turn he tied a knot in it. The bear gave a leap and a growl. Nathaniel, freed, grabbed his gun and raced down the slope toward home.

The next spring Johnson determined to get that bear. Returning one morning to the sugar house, he sat down on the same stump. This time his gun was in his hand. After about an hour of watchful waiting, the bushes began to part. Out came the bear with the barrel still fastened to her tail. To Johnson's amazement she was followed by two cubs, each with a small keg tied to its tail.

(This story was contributed by Nathaniel Johnson of Northfield, whose grandfather, the hero of the tale, lived in Albany, Vt., about 1835.)

—Ruth Mann, *Northfield.*

A Strange Nature

Jim Nichols had a very strange nature and vented his anger on anything that gave him trouble. When a pitchfork tine broke, he yelled, "You darned old nuisance! How come you bother me this-a way? I'll fix you!" And to the delight of his neighbors, he set the fork up and shot at the handle.

The horse rake was out of kilter, and Jim Nichols' temper was testy. Determined to punish the rake for its misbehavior, he hitched himself into the thills and dragged it all over the lot, hitting every rock possible. He went until he was too exhausted to go another foot. Dropping in his tracks, he gasped to the rake, "That'll teach you to play out on me!"

—Marion S. Rowley, *Burlington.*

A PLACE NAME

A toll road ran across a section of northern Vermont. This road, which was closed off by a very high toll gate, crossed a town road, making four corners. At these corners there were built a store, several houses and a school. People came to the store from some distance around. It was not long before they began to speak of going to the "High Gate." When the town was incorporated, the name given to it was Highgate.

—Don H. Sears, *Albany*,
as related by Royal Hazard, Highgate.

Panthers in those Days

Abel Smith moved to Eden, Vermont, from Holden, Massachusetts, in February, 1802. While getting started on his farm the first winter, he had to go to Hyde Park for the hay he used, a distance of ten miles.

Panthers were plentiful at that time, and once Mr. Smith was chased by one. His wife had cooked some meat, which, with other food, was put in a sack and placed on the sleds. After reaching Hyde Park and obtaining his hay, Mr. Smith started his journey home. The snow was

deep, and night came on swiftly, finding him far from his destination. Becoming weary and faint from long walking and fasting, he mounted his load to eat his lunch. His dog, following him, began to growl. He tried to drive it off, but could not. The oxen became frightened also. Just then a terrifying screech was heard behind him, which, he said, made his hair stand on end.

Knowing what the sound meant, Mr. Smith took his meat from his lunch and hurled it as far back along the trail as he could. Then, wrenching a large bough from a tree, he proceeded to urge the frightened oxen into a run. The panther reached the meat and stopped to devour it. Then he started on again in pursuit. But by this time the oxen were well ahead. So, somewhat satisfied by his meal, the animal uttered a few weak screams and give up the chase. Mr. Smith continued on his homeward way rejoicing. He lived to be ninety years of age.

—Bernece Clark, *Enosburg Falls*,
as told by descendants of Mr. Smith.

Seeing and Hearing

Back in the early sixties two elderly men were sitting in front of a country store in Addison County when one of them was overheard to say:

"You know, Rufe, I'm blessed with wonderful eyesight. Why, I can see that horsefly on top of the store chimney."

"I can't see him," came Rufe's hasty reply, "but I know he's there, for I can hear him walk."

How wonderful to be so blessed declared each to the other.

—Don H. Sears, *Albany*.

Straw Hats

This experience can be dated back to the year 1818. Money was very scarce; so the women, wishing to buy extra personal things, tried to make articles which would sell quickly. My great grandmother would go immediately to the barn as soon as the wheat had been gathered. Here she carefully selected the best stalks of wheat and cut off the grain, or heads, from the stalk. Next she would cut

the stalk in half, but she used only the upper half because this was finer to work with. When the right amount was obtained, she carried her precious bundle to the house. When the proper time came for her to start making straw hats, she would get out her boiler and carefully place the wheat straw in it. Then fill with cold water to soften the straw.

Taking seven straws, she would start braiding. After the required number of yards were finished, she would form the braids into skeins resembling the way our yarn comes today.

Now she is ready to sew it. As she first starts, one is reminded of an old-fashioned braided rug, but as her task progresses she shapes the hats over round wooden blocks. These blocks are nothing but what has been cut from a tree, probably only the day before.

Only part of her task is now completed as the hats must be bleached. A large tub is selected, and the hats are tacked against the sides of the tub. A small pan is taken, into which live coals are put, and upon these coals a teaspoonful of sulphur is placed. Then the tub is turned completely over the smoking sulphur. When this task is completed, she removes the hats and presses each with a hot iron. Each hat is a creamy white, and what a variety of sizes! Now old dobbin must be hitched up, as she must sell her hats to the country store. The prices range from twenty-five cents to fifty cents, depending upon the size. At last she has a few pennies to spend as she pleases.

—Lillian L. Jacobs, *Burlington.*

Faith From The Wrong Bottle

Grandma Jimmo, one of Monkton's most faithful communicants of the Catholic faith, lived with her family in a small log house near the old Finney and Jimmo Mill in Barnumtown. The house was small and the family large. For want of space and to have it conveniently at hand, the bottle of Holy Water was kept on the same shelf in the cellarway with the bottle of bluing. A terrible thundershower broke in the dead of night. The grand old lady at once went for her bottle of Holy Water, knowing so well where it was that she did not strike a match. In fact, matches were few and hard to get. In keeping with the teaching of her church, she sprinkled—and in generous quantity—her family and the house in general. After returning the bottle to its accustomed place, she went back to bed. The storm passed over, and

in time morning came. With the coming of daylight, her husband awakened. He could not believe his eyes when he saw everything, even to his wife's face—and his own when he looked in the glass—well spotted with bluing. Waking his wife, he said:

"For heaven's sake! What makes us look so?"

In horror his wife replied: "Joe! Joe Jimmo! I sprinkled the family during the thundershower." Tears were now trickling down her face. "But oh, Joe! I got the bottle of bluing for the bottle of Holy Water! Joe, what will God Almighty say?"

Note: The old mill has long since gone, and what was once a good-sized stream is now only a trickle over the rocks. Some of the old mill-stones are still near where the mill stood.

—Don H. Sears, *Albany.*

VOICE OF THE PRESS

(*Weekly Free Press*, Burlington, Aug. 26, 1881)

WARNING TO TOBACCO USERS: Another frightful warning to consumers of tobacco is given in the case of one Harry Aldrich of South Vernon. He has not been quite right for some time, and last Saturday he drove his wife from home with an axe. Sunday morning he went to one of his neighbors, and wanted a shovel to dig his wife out of the brook and acted very wild. He then went to town and went to two houses with a club threatening to knock the inmates' brains out. He was finally quieted and taken to his home. The physician attending him pronounces it a brain trouble caused by too free use of tobacco.

Collector: Robert G. Morgan, *Burlington.*

A Word Was Spoken

For some years in North Fayston there had been rumors of buried treasure left by the Spanish legions. In 1914, Will Boyce, one of my ancestors, and Arad Sherman supposedly found the spot with the aid

of a witch-hazel rod. Being superstitious, they dug only at night and spoke nary a word, for it was believed that their luck would fail if anyone knew of the operation or if either said a word.

As the hole increased in size, so did their excitement; and when the crowbar struck metal with a resounding clang, Will cried out, "I've found it! I've found it!"

Failure was imminent, for a word had been spoken. Immediately the hole opened up at the bottom, the chest was plainly visible quivering from end to end, the metal bindings rattled as it began to sink deeper and deeper into the ever widening pit. With difficulty Will and Arad climbed out of the hole and scampered for home, leaving their tools to be swallowed up by the earth.

—Marion S. Rowley, *Burlington.*

OTHER-DAY REMEDIES

Dried egg shells, after being rolled with a rolling pin, were mixed with a little honey or maple syrup and given for indigestion. The dried lining of a hen's gizzard served the same purpose.

A treatment for boils was to steam a bottle and then place the neck of the bottle over the boil and hold it there while the steam drew out the core.

For poultices the following cures were sure: cow manure; white of eggs, brown soap and sugar; and bread and milk.

An old Indian remedy for cuts and sores was a salve made of maple sugar and lard.

—Irene C. Scott, *Montgomery.*

"Uncle Henry Pike"

"Uncle Henry Pike" used to visit my grandmother. She related that he wore no stockings, and when he came in winter he always left his cowhide boots outside the door and came in barefooted. When she

urged him to bring his boots in by the fire, he refused, saying he had them all frozen up for the winter and if they were allowed to thaw out his feet would be cold.

(The foregoing was told me by my mother. It must have been about 1860 when the visits mentioned were made to my grandmother.)

—Vera A. Perkins, *Rutland.*

AUTOGRAPHS

(*From Album Dated 1878*)

Each one for himself
And Providence for us all,
As the elephant said
When he danced among the chickens.

You asked me to write in your album.
I hardly know how to begin.
There is nothing original in me,
Excepting—Original Sin.

—Vera A. Perkins, *Rutland.*

Ethan's Reply

My maternal grandfather, Hezekiah Corliss of Richford, used to tell a story about Ethan Allen which was different from any I have heard. This is the way he told it. Ethan Allen often boasted that he was not afraid of anything, even the devil himself. Allen was in the habit of staying out late at night with his cronies, and everyone knew that when he reached home he was well scolded by his wife, who had a high temper and a sharp tongue.

One dark night as Ethan was returning home after being out very late, he was passing the cemetery when a figure, wrapped in a sheet, appeared in his pathway. Unmoved by the apparition, Allen said calmly:

"Who are you?"

A ghostly voice replied, "I am the devil."

"Oh," said Allen cordially, "come along home with me. I married your sister."

—Bertha Hawley Whitney, *Northfield.*

ANCESTRAL CUSTOMS

Hand-hewn nails were used as legal tender.

Carrots were formerly used for butter coloring.

Burn corncobs to procure "cobash" or saleratus.

To leach and boil down for potash or saleratus use ashes from the burning of a new clearing.

Pour milk into warm pans and cover with another to increase cream rise.

Save your pigweed to color sage cheeses.

When you have an oversupply of cheeses made, cover them with paper fastened on with flour paste, and keep cool and dry.

—Marion S. Rowley, *Burlington.*

OLD-TIME SAWS

When our bees were swarming last June, I heard several times the following saws:

A swarm of bees in May
Is worth a load of hay.

A swarm of bees in June
Is worth a silver spoon.

A swarm of bees in July
Ain't worth a fly.

—Alice S. Whitney, *Wilmington.*

Stretching It

I have heard my father, H. Corliss, tell the story that his father used to lead his horse up to the woods before breakfast and hitch onto a log to draw home. One morning it rained. He took the horse by the bits, expecting the log would follow. When he got home, he looked back. The wet horsehide tugs had stretched, and the log had not started. He tied the horse, and went in to breakfast. When he came out the sun was shining. The tugs were drying and shrinking, and the log came bobbing in.

—Ruby Corliss Hawley, 94 years old, *Richford.*

VERMONT SAYINGS

As attractive as the back side of a mule going north.

It looks as though the devil had had an auction and left everything there.

He chops with the head of his ax.

It's a poor back that can't press its own shirt.

As bald as a lamb's mouth.

He doesn't know beans when the bag's untied.

—Collected by Prof. Muriel J. Hughes, U. of Vt., state chairman of the American Dialect Society.

Plenty Tough

A story my grandfather, B. Arnold Streeter, used to tell concerned a district school in Glover, near Barton, sometime between 1849–1851.

The school that he attended had the reputation of being real tough. There were about fifteen boys. It was the common practice the first day of school to toss the new teacher out of the door. The teachers that took their turns were always men, and no matter how big they

were the boys found no trouble in tossing them out. The teachers never lasted very long. There was a continual turnover of them.

One day on the start of a new school year, the boys were surprised to find a short, thin man as their new teacher. They made quite a commotion getting settled in their seats. The teacher called them to order, but they laughed and were getting ready to give him the regular toss. The master ordered them to be quiet. While doing so he pulled two revolvers from his coat pocket and told the boys to look at the knothole in back of the roughly finished room. As they turned to look, he picked up the first revolver, shot three times around the knothole, and with the second finished circling the knot.

Then he told the boys that school had started. He loaded the revolvers again, and placed them in the desk drawer. He remarked that he did not expect to have any trouble, but he just wanted the revolvers handy in case he wanted to keep in practice.

The story has a good ending. My grandfather said that in that year he learned more about the three R's than at any time he had attended school. This master taught at this school for many years. During the period he never had any trouble with any "tough" students.

How true this story may be I don't know, but Grandfather told the same story so many times that I think he began to believe it himself.

—Ruth Mann, *Northfield*,
as related by G. L. Streeter, Northfield.

And The Lord Said Unto Moses

A farmer residing many years ago in Albany, Vermont, did as many of that day and age; namely, make a considerable number of barrels of cider, letting it remain in the cellar until it became vinegar.

This gentleman spoke in somewhat of a squeaky voice. On a certain occasion he was about to return thanks at the table when he suddenly remembered that he had sent his young son Robbie to the cellar for a pitcher of cider that was about the right age for good drinking. Just as all heads were bowed, the gentleman intoned in his squeaky voice: "And the Lord said unto Moses—put the plug in tight, Robbie."

—Mrs. Don H. Sears, *Albany*.

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